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### **‘Blindsight’ – Importance of complementing spatial awareness with ‘spatially blind’ principles**

Over the last decade or more there has been a perception that regional planning is transforming or should transform from an old paradigm of ‘spatially blind’ policies to a focus on ‘place based’ strategies.

It is argued that many spatially blind policies are rarely space neutral in their outcomes and can favour leading or large regions anyway. The OECD argued that the principle growth drivers are not exogenous, like location or natural resource endowments but endogenous ones like human capital, infrastructure, innovation activity, scale and agglomeration effects, and accessibility.

However, we would argue that exogenous factors do indeed influence growth, if not the direction then definitely the scale.

It could also be argued that big macro trends (e.g. globalization, ageing populations) are relatively exogenous factors for many regions, having both seen and unforeseen impacts. These factors may actually be best addressed by over-arching ‘spatially blind’ policies, rather than leaving it up to whether a specific region has the capacity or capability to capture the necessary support for adjustment.

#### **Why an understanding of place is needed?**

Analysis will demonstrate that over the last decade both high income or high population locations can grow faster or slower than average. A number of factors contribute to this of which some are endogenous but some are most definitely exogenous. Location does matter.

#### **But a consistent approach to planning based on over-arching principles is also required.**

Data shows some places in Australia have benefited from greater levels of public sector investment and intervention than others. It is acknowledged that ‘spatially blind’ policies can have poor spatial implications, however place based strategies can also be captured by the interests of powerful, well informed or well positioned.